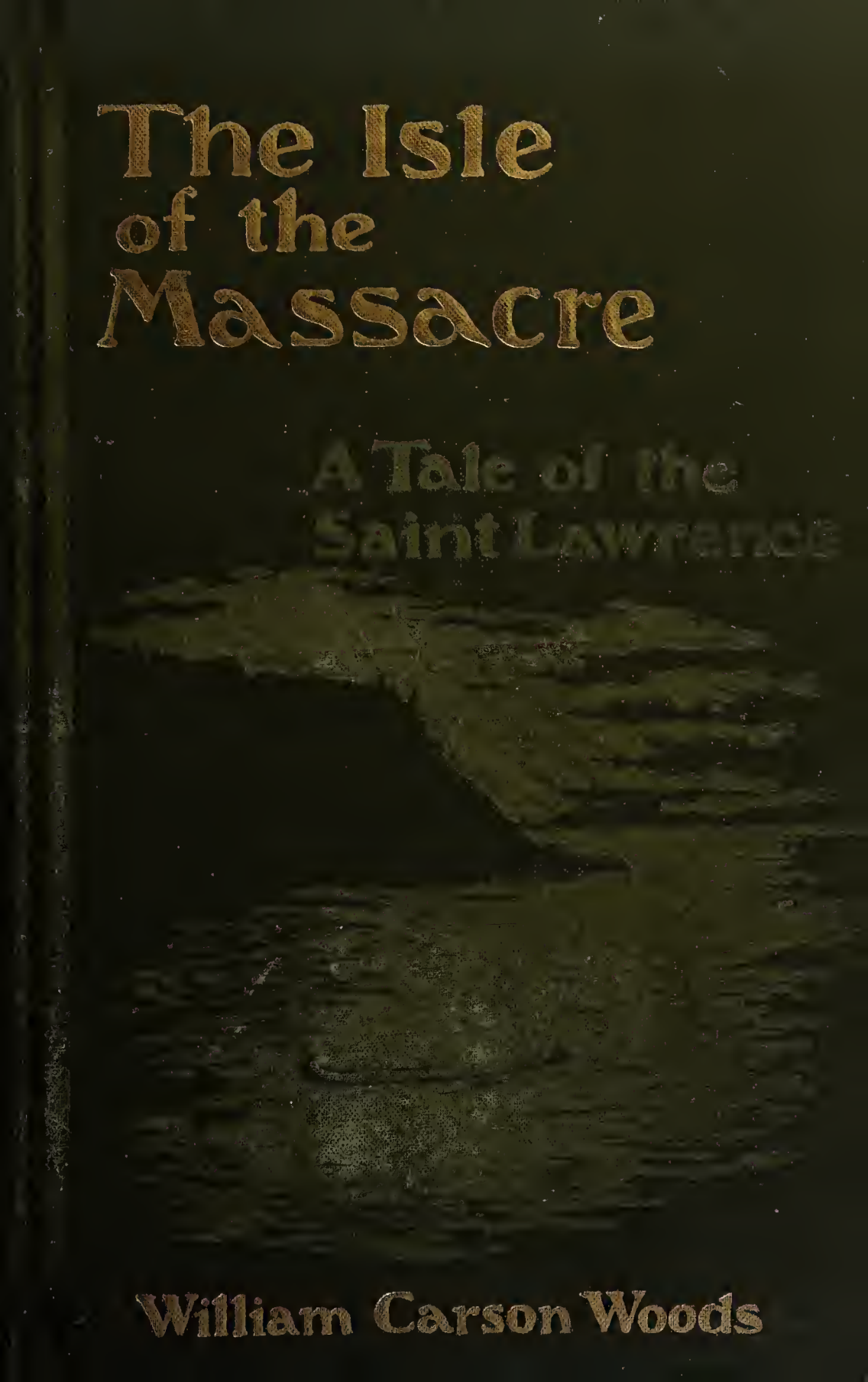
The Isle of the Massacre

A Tale of the Saint Lawrence



William Carson Woods

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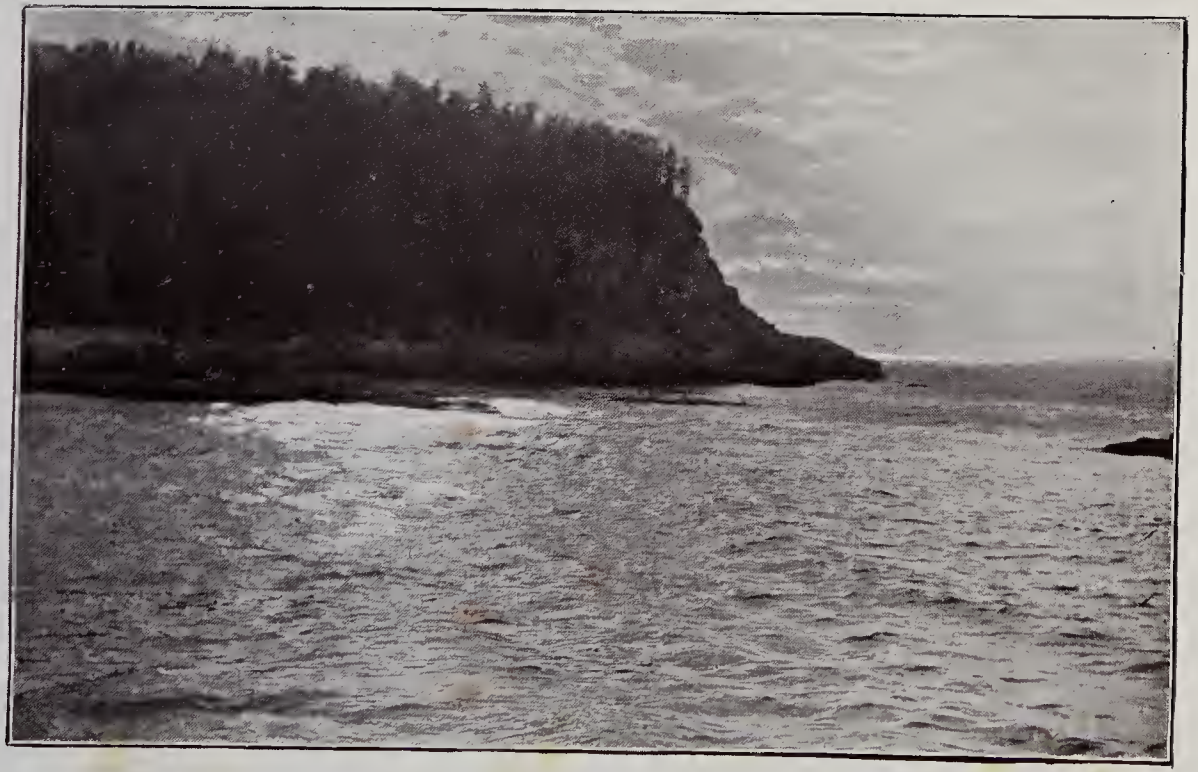
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THE ISLE OF THE MASSACRE.



"The Isle of the Massacre." From a photo by J. Wilson, Esq., Ottawa

THE ISLE of the MASSACRE



BY

WILLIAM CARSON WOODS

FOLLOWING THE FRENCH OF THE
LATE J.C. TACHÉ ESQ.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

JOHN INNES

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NOTE.

THE following is probably the oldest of the Indian legends of Canada, the main incidents in connection with it having been related by Donnacanna to Jacques Cartier on the latter's first ascent of the St. Lawrence in 1535.

It has been charmingly told in French by the late J. C. Taché, Esq., of Ottawa, and the present version is,

in a great measure, an adapting of the tale as given by him in "Les soirées Canadiennes."

The story is carefully preserved among the traditions of both the Micmac and Malechite tribes through whose aged men it has been handed down from father to son, and it may be noted that, while about half a century ago Mr. Taché received it from an old chief of the former nation it was recently told the writer, substantially as here recounted, by Paul Bryiere the well-known Malechite guide of the Bic Region.

The closeness with which the details corresponded was such as not to warrant any variation from those

given in Mr. Taché's narrative—and coming as they do through widely different channels present an instance of the faithfulness shown by Indians in transmitting to their posterity the important events in their people's history.

CHAPTER I.

A LONG time ago, a little over a year before France knew of the existence of the River St. Lawrence, fifty families of Micmac Indians dwelt in that district now so well known to Canadian sportsmen, the country lying between Rivière du Loup and Metis.

Their home, bordering the south shore of the St. Lawrence for a hundred miles and extending backward to the height of land, was the western extremity of territory then occupied by the Micmacs, who, with the neighboring tribe of Malechites, formed a large branch of the great Algonquin people.

At the time of which we write,

this hardy race, the first to meet Jacques Cartier and his adventurous companions on their arrival in the New World, inhabited the whole of that region to which France afterwards gave the name of Acadia, and from the waters of the St. Lawrence eastward to the ocean and southward to the Bay of Fundy, were the recognized masters of the land.

Their territory was rich and fertile, the country of the Micmacs on the St. Lawrence being especially so, and abounding in all that its Indian inhabitants conceived to be necessary for the welfare and happiness of mankind.

Moose, caribou, and smaller game were plentiful. The woods swarmed with hare and partridge,—the rivers and lakes teemed with trout, eel, and

"touladi,"—and the summer catch of cod or salmon, and more valuable still, of seal and porpoise, from the St. Lawrence, was only rivalled by the myriads of water-fowl flocking to its banks.

Birch, for building canoes,—pine, the eider-down of the hunter,—and maple yielding its sugary sap,—grew in profusion throughout the forest.

Such, indeed, was the natural wealth of the land, that when writing of it some years later, a Jesuit missionary quaintly summed up his remarks by adding, that "The palace of King Solomon himself was not better provided for by his army of sutlers," and the sportsman who knows the resources of the country to-day will not consider the praise unmerited.

The Micmacs, an industrious and intelligent people, were not unworthy of their good fortune. They not only appreciated but profited by so many advantages, and being distant from the fierce tribes of the West, and South, who but seldom molested them, enjoyed a tranquility then uncommon among Indian nations. Tracking the caribou or trapping the beaver in winter,—hunting the wolverine and bear or taking the salmon and cod in summer,—at peace amongst themselves and far from their enemies, they passed their lives in contentment and ease, happy in the midst of the grand and generous Nature by which they were surrounded.

* * * * *

The hunting of winter was over,

deep-sea fish had already made their appearance, and the fifty families, laden with furs or other spoils of the chase, had forsaken, for a time, the well trodden footpaths of the great interior forest.

As was the yearly custom, they had assembled at the Baie du Bic, to rest from their labors, and to pass a few weeks of village life together, before dispersing along the shore of the St. Lawrence to the different stations occupied by each group during the fishing season.

Summer was fast approaching. The sea-green foliage of aspens, elms, maples, and other budding trees already mingled with the more sombre and stately ever-green pines, and under the influence of the warmer sun and higher tides of spring the

Baie du Bic was again free from the ice which for months had covered its bosom, now appearing all beautiful in the fresh loveliness of its vernal toilet.

Few spots are more charmingly picturesque than Bic. Broken by grassy plateaus, scarped cliffs, and naked capes, the coast line is encircled by an amphitheatre of mountains from which, at either end, in rapid or cascade, a stream hurries and leaps; to the north, bounded by pine-clad hills and sentinelled by two steep and rocky islets, a narrow entrance frames the view of the noble St. Lawrence, while far on the river the Isle of Bic and farther still dim mountains on the distant shore, fringe the horizon.

It was opposite this sheet of water,

on one of the plateaus bordering the beach, and nestling amid a grove of maple and wild cherry trees, that the pyramid-like cabins of the Micmacs had been placed.

From the centre of the village, winding roads led in different directions towards the mountains, and along these and by footpaths lined with snares for trapping the hare, the wigwams became gradually lost to sight in the depths of the forest.

The village life of the people was a quiet and a happy one, and the hours passed quickly, either in the contented reverie so loved by Indians, in the work of preparing and curing their furs, or in the manufacturing of articles for dress or for household use. Canoe building, especially, was one of the occupations of spring-time,

as the sap then flowing through its veins rendered the birch easy to peel, and to the younger men of the village was yearly assigned the task of returning to the forests of the interior, in order that they might procure from the giant trees to be found there the large strips of bark necessary for that purpose.

Nearly a month had then passed since the assembling of the families at the Baie, and but a day or two before, the bark party, having bidden their friends goodbye, and promising a speedy return, had set out on their expedition.

It was a beautiful morning, a pleasant calm was in the air, all Nature seemed to welcome the May sun under which the Baie glistened, and at the Indian encampment Na-

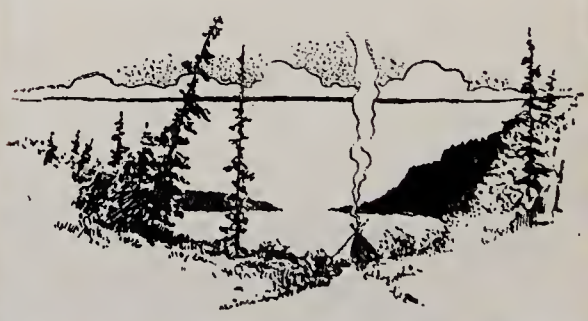


"Happy in the Midst of the Grand and Generous Nature."

ture's children, like the feathered songsters around them, were enjoying the warmth and brightness of spring.

Before their wigwam doors or on the village green the men were engaged in shaping cedar for their canoes,—children played joyously on the sward,—aged women and maidens, lazily reclining amid the furs, were working at mocassins and mantles or embroidering "matachias," and hanging from branches of trees near by were "nagânes" containing the infants, while seated beside them were their mothers, who frequently withdrew eye or hand from the root-thread they were preparing, either to give a loving look at their little ones or another impulse to the tiny cradles. The

future was mercifully hidden,—the hardships of the past winter were already forgotten,—the present was theirs; seldom having experienced serious trouble it did not enter into their thoughts, and meanwhile they enjoyed themselves as those by whom misfortune is unlooked-for only can,—their industry and seeming security, their unstudied attitudes and carelessly perfect poses, adding but another charm to the many beauties about them.



CHAPTER II.

SEATED thus, in half dreamy content, they were chatting together in the low, quiet tones which characterize the intercourse of Indian families, when two young men of the absent bark party were seen running at full speed along the main road towards the encampment.

Unexpected as was this arrival the Micmacs continued their conversation, and although the louder tones of the squaws betrayed both anxiety and excitement the men neither evinced curiosity nor ceased for a moment their tranquil labor. Breathless and almost exhausted the runners reached the centre of the group on the village green, and looking

round for a moment on the peaceful scene about them, awaited from their elders the signal to speak. Then, questioned by the chief, they told the reason of their sudden return.

On the evening of the preceding day while the bark party was leisurely making its way through the forest, one of its leaders had heard the low sound of approaching voices, and hastily informing his comrades they had concealed themselves in the adjoining brushwood. A few moments later they were astounded to see a body of strangers, dressed in war paint, moving rapidly along the path towards the Baie.

Such was the news brought by the young men to the circle collected about them, and in an instant the scene changed to one of anguish and

confusion. Unused to war and its terrors, the frightened squaws uttered cries of alarm, and surrounded by clinging children or pressing the little ones in the "nagânes" to their bosoms, threw themselves weeping into the huts as if in them to seek an instant refuge. But though knowing well the full import of tidings like these, the Micmac warriors, with the stoicism of their race, gave no evidence of surprise or fear.

"Almouts!"—"The dogs!" — was their contemptuous ejaculation, and while the frail wigwams resounded with piteous sobbing, the fathers of the tribe calmly but rapidly took counsel how best to meet the unlooked for danger.

The invaders, said to be numerous, were advancing along one of the

principal pathways of the forest, a route in constant use leading directly to the village, and according to the calculations of the two runners, would reach the Baie du Bic at an early hour that same evening. The other members of the bark party had remained in the woods to keep watch on the enemy, and to give notice of their approach some hours in advance. What was to be done? Immediate action was necessary as hardly eight hours intervened between the present moment and that when the cry of battle would echo through the woods. As the intruders were approaching by land, a way of escape both simple and safe would under other circumstances have been open, namely, to descend the St. Lawrence in canoes, and join the

tribe's encampment at Matane. To carry out this plan, however, a canoe was necessary for each family, and the villagers possessed at the time but five old ones which had recently been repaired, and quite sufficed for the peaceful life that had been theirs an hour before.

Flight by land, with old men, women, and children, in presence of a party of war, was plainly impossible.

Few were the moments left for consideration, speedily the decision of the warriors was taken, and without losing further time, the five canoes—equipped and well stocked with provisions—were given to several of the most aged men of the tribe, under whose charge the women who would soon become

mothers and those with babes at the breast, were sent down the St. Lawrence to the village of their brethren at Matane. In this way about thirty souls, the most helpless and deserving of pity, were withdrawn from the anguish of the moment and the perils of the future. For those left behind there now only remained to resolve to conquer, or, if die they must, to die fighting bravely in defence of their native soil. Such was the determination taken by the Micmacs, and immediately all possible preparations were made for offering a desperate resistance to the invaders.

While all this was taking place in the unfortunate encampment, the new comers advanced cautiously but with rapidity through the forest.

Their route lay along a well defined path, crossing a mountainous but easily travelled country which presented on the way neither lakes nor large rivers capable of causing serious delay. The most difficult part of the road was to be met with in the immediate neighborhood of the Baie, but there numerous pathways circling in the ravines of the mountains and converging towards the village, pathways along which the Micmacs passed daily in going to the adjacent woods for such game as they required, offered to the invaders not only an easy way of approach, but incalculable advantages for an attack like that which was meditated.



CHAPTER III.

FROM an intimate knowledge of the ground, and profiting by the confidence of the strangers who in no wise suspected the presence of scouts around them, the Micmacs remaining in the woods had been able to make themselves perfectly acquainted with all that it was important for them to know.

On the night of the departure of the two runners for the encampment at Bic, the scouts had easily discovered that the party they were watching was a body of Iroquois, bent on pillage, and composed of about a hundred warriors. This band was, in all probability, a detachment from one of the great

expeditions which, at this period, and for a long time after, the Iroquois nations used to send into the valley of the St. Lawrence.

Very rarely did the Iroquois take any other route than that of the St. Lawrence when they ventured so far into the country of their Northern neighbors, for this vast region was to them a veritable *pays inconnu*, and it would have been necessary, moreover, to cross the territory of the Abenaquis, a valiant and warlike tribe of the Algonquin nation, who would not allow easy passage to the foes of their race.

Frequently, however, after having coasted along the St. Lawrence shores, the Iroquois pushed up the streams of the larger tributary rivers, either to hunt, when they needed

provisions, or to raid the villages and scattered settlements of the interior.

Aided by their acute observation, and with that marvellous intuition natural to Indians, the Micmacs at once knew that their enemies had reached the interior by the large river which to-day is called the Trois Pistoles, and had then ascended a small river tributary to it now known as the Bouabouscache, until, finding the "portages" becoming numerous, and discovering on the banks of the Bouabouscache the "*chemin plaqué*" or blazed forest path recently used by the Micmacs, they had left their canoes in order to follow the tracks of the families whose proximity was thus plainly indicated. These facts ascertained,

the Micmac scouts divided themselves into two little bands, the duty of one being to follow the Iroquois cautiously, to give some hours notice of their approach to the inhabitants of the village, and to remain with them for its defence.

The other band, composed of five picked braves, remained in the forest, for the young men had resolved that whether the enemy were successful in attacking the village or not, full revenge would be taken on them for their unwarranted invasion. The duty, therefore, of the five Indians, was to retrace and examine the Iroquois tracks, to begin, if possible, their task of vengeance, and, having done this, to find the means of rendering that vengeance complete.

This last party we will follow for

a time on their delicate and dangerous mission.

* * * * * *

After half a day's forced march over the roads so lately trodden by the intruders, they reached the banks of the Bouabouscache River, at a place where the tracks of the Iroquois suddenly ended. The Micmacs had anticipated this, and it did not, therefore, cause them any surprise. After a minute examination of the neighborhood, and knowing this forest of their country so well that it was almost impossible for man or beast to displace a branch unnoticed, they discovered disguised traces of a descent on the south shore of the river, from which the Iroquois, marching in the water, had reached

a ford of pebbles leading to the road on which they had set out for Bic.

The other tracks, unnoticeable to any but Indians, led them to a pile of branches hidden by some uprooted saplings at the foot of a little cliff, and under these branches were found twenty Iroquois canoes, fashioned in a style quite different from those used in the country.

The canoes were there—with poles and paddles—but nothing else.

As it was quite improbable that the Iroquois had carried with them to Bic all the baggage, and especially all the provisions, necessary for a distant expedition into an unknown land, and, indeed, had seemed lightly laden when on the march, the Micmacs continued their search. At last, about a mile from the spot where the

canoes had been concealed, they succeeded in discovering marks of another descent on the north bank of the river, and following these traces found, near by, the baggage and provisions "cached" or buried in the ground by the Iroquois. They had seen everything, and now was the moment for speedy council, afterwards for speedy action. Like all men of contemplative nature, the Indians possessed the precious faculty of concentration, so necessary to singleness of purpose and accomplishment of aim. Silencing for the time, therefore, their fears for the many loved ones at that moment in peril, they quickly debated what course to pursue, their one thought being that Bic then held a band of hated enemies, who had made war on

them without cause, and who must be allowed no chance of escape.

* * * * * *

Distant two days by canoe, was to be found a friendly encampment of the Malechite Indians. The Bouabouscache, as we have seen, discharges itself into the Trois Pistoles. Ascending this latter river a little lake is reached, from which, by a portage of some hundreds of paces, the *voyageur* arrives at the Acheberache chain of lakes, and from these lakes, by way of the Acheberache River, he may descend into the great lake Temiscouata, which empties its waters into the St. John, by the beautiful river Madaouaska.

Apart from the descent, short but "*portageuse*," of the Acheberache,

this route, which is the natural communication between the St. Lawrence and St. John valleys, may be traversed in canoes with the greatest ease, but a few short and easy "portages" interrupting the use of the paddle, and more than half the passage being made across the sleeping waters of the lakes. It was at the mouth of the Madaouaska, on the spot to-day known as Little Falls, that the Malechite village of which we have spoken was then situated.

The Malechite Indians are kinsfolk of the Micmacs. They differ from the latter, however, in dialect, and somewhat in customs and usages, exhibiting, also, singular individuality in shaping many of the articles they manufacture, and, indeed, even to-day a Malechite canoe may, at a

long distance, be distinguished from those of the other tribes on account of its peculiar form. Like all Algonquins, the Malechite Indians had a profound hatred of the Iroquois, and this hatred, richly returned, would have occasioned many more frequent rencontres between the two nations, had the more numerous Iroquois known better the land of the Malechites.

In taking the resolution, therefore, of asking succour from the warriors of Madaouaska, the five Micmacs felt sure that it would be granted them.

Without losing an instant, two of the party set out in an Iroquois canoe to summon their kinsmen for a pursuit of the invaders. The others remained on the banks of the Bouabouscache to accomplish the three-

fold object of destroying the canoes and provisions they had found, of preparing ambuscades and hidden paths to facilitate their own retreat from the attack, and of watching cautiously for the return of the enemy.



CHAPTER IV.

MEANWHILE we will return to Bic.

A little before sunset on the evening of that day, the Iroquois reached the immediate neighborhood of the village. They did not imagine themselves discovered, and, from all they had seen, fully expected to surprise the Micmacs in the *abandon* of perfect security.

It was the hour when, on the lower St. Lawrence shore, the sea-gulls redouble their shrill cries, as if to greet beforehand the closing of the day; the hour when, high in air, the crows reassemble and in noisy and fantastic rounds take their last flight before seeking a resting place for the night.

Having arrived at the western shore of the Baie, the Iroquois first reconnoitered the pathways converging towards the village, and at once divided their band into several detachments. Then, thirsty for blood, with stealthy tread, their bodies crouching forward, and their keen ears intent on every sound, they advanced, tomahawks in hand, lessening at every step the circle formed round the fated village. They reached the cabins, but to their rage and disappointment all that could be seen were the ruins of an encampment which then seemed to have been abandoned several days. Aided by the daylight that remained, they hastily searched the borders of the woods and the shores of the Baie. No human being was there. They

listened—and no sound was heard other than that of the lapping surge of a calm river caressing the beach—and of the murmuring trees, evening requiem of a beautiful day, whispering softly along the water's side. After another and lengthened search, and convinced of their complete failure, the call to reassemble was given, and chagrined and discomfited they returned to the beach.

Before them lay the beautiful sheet of water which fills the basin of the Bic, illumined at the moment by the last reflections of twilight, while the invigorating air of the St. Lawrence, laden with exhalations of salt plants and of sea-weed, refreshed and revivified their exhausted bodies, now drooping from the long and rapid march of the day. Then, re-entering

the woods, they sought the glade occupied that morning by the Micmac wigwams, to prepare a camp for the night, and to give themselves up to the unpleasant reflections caused by their unexpected disappointment.

* * * * * *

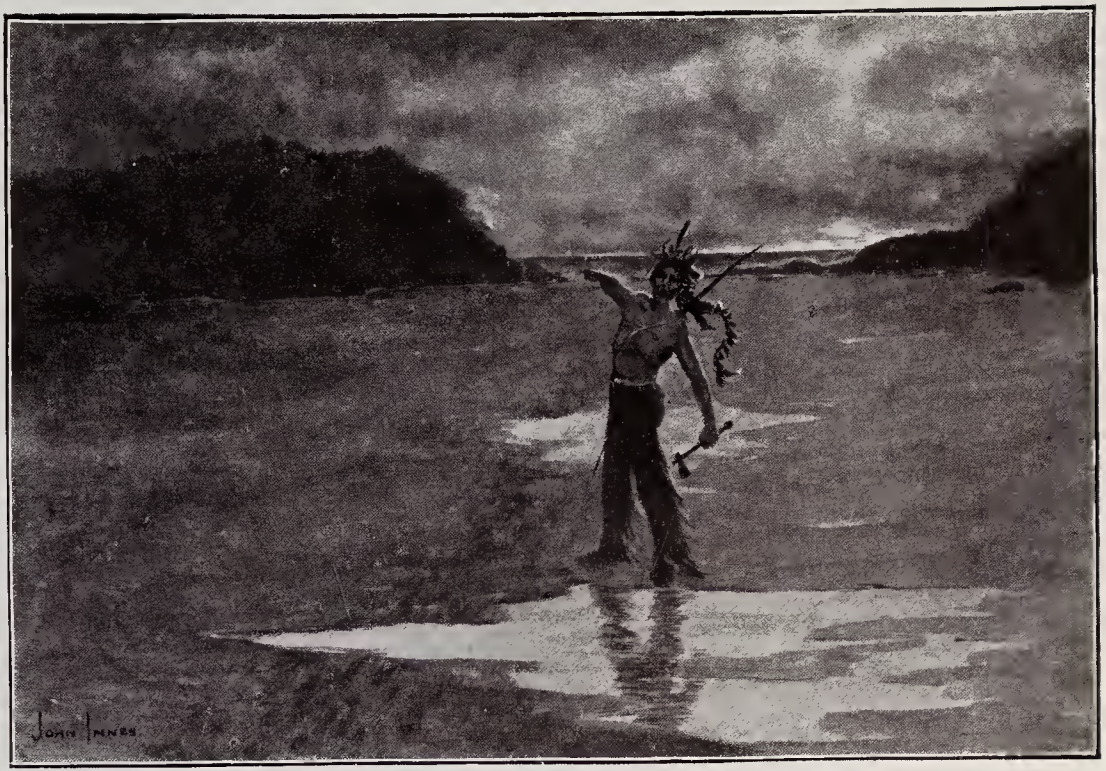
The night was calm and still. The sentinels, whom the Iroquois were always careful to place on watch, heard no noise—only the doleful cry of the owl, attracted by the camp-fire's smoke. They saw nothing—only the aurora borealis, the wierd "dance of the marionettes" in the northern heavens, which in this land is so fantastically beautiful.

Tranquil as was the night, however, to the Southern invaders it seemed long and dreary, nor was

their sleep in harmony with the sweet repose of nature around them. At last the faint light of dawn appeared in the eastern sky, giving fair promise of a day as peaceful as the night that was ending. It was greeted, instead, by a horrible yell proceeding from the river shore, a yell which reverberated again and again from the echoes in the surrounding mountains. The yell was the war cry of the Iroquois. One of their party, restless and unable to sleep, had arisen from his couch at the break of day, to breathe the cool air of morning on the beach of the Baie. Discovering that the basin was dry, and astonished at the disappearance of the sheet of water he had seen the previous evening (for low tide on the sea-shore is often

a novelty to those who have lived far in the interior), he had walked out over the flats.

Suddenly, in the dim twilight, he espied on the sand the marks of human feet, marks which had not been completely effaced by the tide, and which led in a faint trail towards the St. Lawrence. His suspicions were aroused, and lying down at full length on the strand, he peered intently in the direction taken by the tracks. Favored by the chilliness of the morning, he perceived, as it were a vapor ascending from the steep cliffs of one of the islets at the entrance of the Baie, distant some hundreds of paces, and to which, at that moment, it was easily possible to walk dry shod. Doubt vanished. The footprints were those of the



"A Yell Which Reverberated Again and Again."

inhabitants of the abandoned village, and that vapor but the effect of a large number of human beings collected in a confined space. The Micmacs were there! It was clear, therefore, that they had no canoes, and that it was impossible for them to escape! Then it was that the Indian had given a triumphant cry which his awakened comrades, seizing their arms, had instantly repeated.

On the islet all was still. No answering shout as yet came from the spot to which the Iroquois, an instant later, pointed the armed warriors assembled around him. But the Micmacs now knew that their hiding place was discovered, and in a small cavern which may still be seen in the steep sides of the islet rock, and in which, all that night, men,

women, and children, closely packed together, and maintaining the deepest silence, had hoped against hope for escape, vows were once more taken to spend their last drop of blood in defence of the land, the loved land, of their forefathers.

* * * * * *

Some time elapsed before the preparations of the invaders for the attack were complete, and meanwhile the tide had again begun to rise. The Micmacs had relied greatly on this, as in consequence of it, their chances of offering a successful resistance to the enemy were very materially increased.

At last, in order of battle, the whole body of Iroquois set forward to the islet. No sooner had they started, than all the Micmacs able to

bear arms issued from the rocks and stationed themselves, with the warriors in front, on the narrow beach of the islet, around which the incoming tide was fast mounting.

The Iroquois, although confident of victory, felt, nevertheless, that brave men, fighting for the lives of the women and children behind them, were not enemies whom they could afford to despise, or who would die without a hard struggle. They proceeded cautiously, therefore, and in good order, advancing towards the islet along a narrow shoal which connected it with the mainland, and which was rapidly being covered by the inflowing water. From the ranks of both assailed and assailers, clouds of arrows, in silent but deadly flight, now sped through the air; blood

flowed freely; warriors on both sides—singing the death songs of their race—fell mortally wounded, while others, badly hurt by the keen shafts piercing their bodies, retired disabled from the fray.

At the outset, the fight went clearly in favor of the Micmacs, who, firmly planted on solid ground, were in the best position possible to make every shot tell, their opponents, meanwhile, progressing slowly and with difficulty over the shifting and unstable sands.

At last the foremost Iroquois, hitherto hindered from spreading by the rising tide, gained the beach of the islet, and flinging their bows to the warriors in the ranks behind them, rushed yelling, tomahawks in hand, on their enemies.

One final and destructive volley of

arrows was sent, at near range, by the beleagured villagers, who, closing together, shoulder to shoulder, with war hatchets aloft, and shouting the cry of their people, awaited the charge resolutely. The onslaught was fierce. Noted was the Iroquois race for its fighting men, and the memory of many a former triumph, added to their frequently expressed contempt for the more peaceful Northerners, spurred them on in an effort to end the combat with a single blow.

For a time it seemed as if they would succeed, but furious as was their charge it did not break the Micmac phalanx, which, battling with a courage and firmness that were admirable, successfully held its ground. Sorely they were pressed, but gallantly they fought, and at last

from sheer strength and determination, they succeeded in forcing their adversaries back into the water.

The Iroquois, feeling the impossibility of gaining an immediate victory, and seeing the rising flood curling still deeper behind them, finally retreated towards the mainland, keeping good order, but pursued by the taunts and arrows of those they had come so far to assail. On both sides a number had been killed and many had been wounded, and both parties were exhausted with fatigue. The wounded of each tribe were carried off by their comrades, and the dead left on the sands, to be rolled about and covered by the mounting water, and to reappear, livid and ghastly, at the next low tide.

* * * * * *

Disconcerted and beaten for the moment, but confident in their superior strength, the Iroquois had but to rest and recover themselves. It was not so with the Micmacs. Their losses, while far less numerous, were relatively far greater, and had been borne, moreover, by the best men of their band, a band composed of combatants of all ages and capacities. They knew well also, that the Iroquois would not, a second time, commit the mistake of attacking them over a rising tide, and felt that they were not strong enough to meet the enemy openly and without protection.

A short consultation was held by the warriors, and the women were immediately directed to raise a species of fortification in front of the cavern. For a design such as this the ground

was happily suited, as facing and bordering on the entrance to the grotto lay a number of huge detached rocks, in appearance like so many druidical monuments, forming a small semi-circular enclosure about its mouth. The purpose of the Micmacs was to barricade the spaces between these rocks, and having secured a firm foundation, to heighten the whole rampart wall in the manner generally adopted by Indians for defences of the sort.

Paddles,—fishing rods,—the poles of wigwams,—and such small saplings as grew here and there among the crevices of the rocks on the islet side, were used by the women to construct a double palisade, which was strengthened still further by the stones, sand, furs, and even baggage and provis-

ions, piled between,—and so well employed were the hours of respite given by the ebbing water, that the next low tide found the Micmacs behind a strong entrenchment. By its aid they were enabled to avail themselves of the help of their wounded comrades, the women and even the older children, for the defence, these fighting under protection of the palisade, while the unwounded men still defended the approach from the water's side.

The Iroqouis — from the farther shore—had witnessed the activity of their enemies with curiosity. Not knowing the nature of the ground adjoining the cavern, they had no idea that such effective preparations for resistance were in progress, and immediately on the falling of the tide,

the whole party once more set forward, in order of battle, towards the islet.

Longer and more bitter was now the attack; charge after charge was made on the unfortunate Micmac band, and charge after charge beaten back,—until the Iroquois, finding all efforts to carry the barricade of their antagonists fruitless, were a second time forced to retreat, baffled and discomfited, to the mainland. Again both besiegers and besieged were weakened by the loss of killed and wounded, but once more the victory of the Micmacs had been dearly bought.

Around the mouth of the cavern which sheltered the weeping women and children, their staunchest warriors, covered with wounds, lay dead

or dying, and the despairing survivors, who knew that help could not arrive in time, and that their last victory had been gained, felt that hope had fled.

The Iroquois invaders—who had relied on their superior numbers—now discovered that they had underestimated the desperate resolution of their opponents, and regretted not having availed themselves sooner of other means at their command to obtain a victory.

It was plain, too, that the position of the besieged had been well chosen, as from one direction only, that along the low shelving bank which appeared at low tide, was it possible to successfully attack them, the steep shores of the little islet in all other places being continually surrounded by deep water.

The long day was at last beginning to close, and night again brought a full tide,—the last which the doomed Micmacs were to see rise on the shores of their beautiful Baie.

The hopelessness of their adversaries' position was manifest to the Iroquois, who now feared that under cover of darkness the Micmacs might endeavor to leave the islet, and scattering far and wide among the mountains near the Baie, seek to escape by flight from the death which was so rapidly approaching them. To allow, therefore, of no such possibility, the Southerners passed part of the night guarding the shoal which led from the islet to the mainland. But the precaution was needless.

Too well did the villagers know

the futility of any such attempt, and the beams of their enemies' fire, dancing across the waters and repelling the encircling gloom, served only to reveal a pitiful group, glad to emerge from the stifling cave, and breathing in quiet despair their last deep draughts of the cool St. Lawrence breeze.

* * * * * *

Another dawn appeared, and with the dawn another low tide, of which the Iroquois hastened to make the best use. Marching towards the islet, their party, when distant about an arrow's flight from the Micmac rampart, suddenly halted. Then the unfortunate occupants of the cavern, now defended only by old men, women, children, and wounded warriors, saw several of the enemy

light enormous torches of bark, and set out towards them at a run, each torchbearer being accompanied by two companions carrying broad shields of hard wood, purposely made by them during the night, and against which the strongest driven shafts rattled in vain.

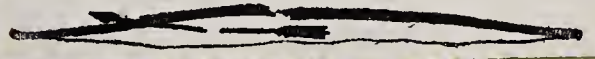
Swiftly, on they came, their advance, meanwhile, being well supported by their comrades, who from the higher ground in the rear, swept every foot of the rampart wall with well-directed volleys of arrows. In a few minutes the feeble palisade was on fire. Jeering like fiends, the Iroquois retired about a hundred paces, and awaited, with tomahawks ready, the coming forth of their prey. The waiting was not long. Each Micmac, man or woman, who from sickness, or



"The Beams of Their Enemies' Fire Dancing Across the Water."

terror, or wounds, was not fated to suffocate, rushed with the last energies of despair on the foe. The conflict was short and could have but one ending, although even then a fresh loss in killed and wounded was the price paid by the Iroquois for victory.

Mothers and children, grandsires and maidens, fathers and sons, the Micmacs all perished, either slowly by suffocation, or more speedily under the tomahawks of their remorseless adversaries. Food for the foxes and the crows, their scalped and mutilated bodies lay on the narrow beach or in the gloomy cave, and from that time forward the place was known as the "Isle of the Massacre," a name it bears down to this day.



CHAPTER V.

ALTHOUGH victorious, the Iroquois invaders were but half content with the result of their expedition. Instead of, as often before, surprising and pillaging an undefended village, they had met with unlooked for and obstinate resistance. So obstinate had been this resistance, that of their own men twenty lay dead or dying, while thirty others had been wounded, some so seriously as to be unfit for service, and indeed, when a count of their total strength was made, it was found that, of the one hundred warriors who had arrived at Bic, but sixty able-bodied men now remained.

During that and the following day

the party remained on the shore of the Baie, to recover strength and to complete preparations for the return journey, and the next morning, the fourth after arriving, they again set out for the Bouabouscache River, knowing that any further progress on the expedition was impossible, and hoping soon once more to see the woods, the lakes, and the rivers of their own country.

The forest was calm and still; of enemies no trace was seen or sound was heard; and as the party advanced further along the well beaten track and plunged deeper into the gloomy woods, their hope that all the population of this part of the Micmac territory had been destroyed grew rapidly into the certainty of assurance. The chiefs expected to reach the banks of

the Bouabouscache by the evening of the second day's march, and in order to make quicker progress, on the morning of that day divided their band into two detachments, thirty of the most active men going before to fetch the canoes and prepare a camp for the night, while the fifty others, those wounded or carrying baggage, followed more slowly.

* * * * * *

Another return must now be spoken of—that of the two Micmac messengers sent to the Malechite village five days before. Their mission has been accomplished speedily and successfully, and on the previous evening they had returned to their comrades, accompanied by twenty-five of their Malechite kinsmen. The allied party thus consisted of only thirty men, not

one-half the strength of their foe, but every Indian was a picked warrior, fresh, alert and vigorous, and to him each step in his forest home was as well known as to the caribou roaming over it.

Nor had the three Micmacs left by their companions on the banks of the Bouabouscache been meanwhile idle. Having destroyed the canoes and provisions of the Iroquois without in the least altering the external appearance of the "caches," they had traversed the country bordering on the forest pathway, had prepared ambuscades at different places along it, and from these ambushes had opened hidden tracks through the thick and almost impassable brushwood, in order that their own retreat from the attack might be easy.

Immediately on the arrival of the allies, a few of each, following the winding routes so well known to the Micmac guides, set out for the Baie du Bic, to watch the movement of the invaders and learn their strength and condition, while from the remaining Micmacs, the Malechites were informed of all that it was important to know, and in conjunction with them, laid plans for an attack on the common enemy.

The scouts returned to their friends about the noon of the next day, several hours before the arrival of the Iroquois at the Bouabouscache, bringing news of the strength of the invaders, the condition of their wounded, and the division of their force into two detachments, from which change in the order of march

the allies rightly conjectured the purpose of the enemy to lose no time in regaining their canoes. After hearing the report of the scouts, the Micmacs and their friends at once set out to begin the operations they had planned.

Meanwhile the two Iroquois bands, distant a couple of hours' march from each other, steadily approached the river. The Baie du Bic was now far behind, and along the well-trodden path, shaded by majestic trees, they advanced in all confidence, not having the least suspicion that from this silent and seemingly deserted forest a vigilant enemy was watching, and calculating on, their every move.



CHAPTER VI.

ABOUT the middle of the afternoon, the foremost party of Iroquois reached the ford of pebbles crossing the Bouabouscache.

Having crossed the river, they again, as on first arriving, waded through the water along the south beach, and soon reached the spot where their canoes had been concealed. Hardly had their hands touched the uppermost branches of the saplings that covered the hiding place, when a volley of arrows issued from all sides of the surrounding thickets. So sudden and unlooked-for was the attack, so exposed was their position, and for the moment so helpless did they feel, that, panic-

stricken, the band broke ground and fled towards the river in disorder.

Profiting by the confusion of their enemies the allies pursued them with tomahawks down to the water's edge, and it was only on hearing the shouts of the second party of Iroquois answering the cries of the fugitives, that they retired into the forest.

Ten scalps were the trophies obtained by the Micmac-Malechite party from this first success, which had not cost them a single man, and which, furthermore, increased considerably the number of wounded among their foes.

Astounded and dismayed, the Iroquois bands, once more united on the north bank of the river, took hurried counsel how best to meet this unexpected danger. The situation was

terrible. Of the original band but seventy men now remained, and of these, half were wounded more or less seriously. Who their assailants were, in what number, or with what resources, they knew not. And their canoes had disappeared. This last loss was one of which, as Indians, they well knew the full meaning, and for an instant it caused the shadow of a sickening fear to hover over their minds. But moments were now precious. The food taken for the expedition to Bic was almost finished, and although it was probable that the "cache" of provisions had undergone the same fate as the canoes, and that there also another ambuscade was in waiting, one course only remained for them to take. In spite of every risk, before night fell,

an attempt must be made to save what was their only certain means of existence from becoming the spoil of the foe.

That a deadly contest would result the chiefs felt convinced, and in order to be prepared it was necessary that they set out in full force. All the men still capable of bearing arms, therefore, to the number of fifty, were mustered for the expedition, the twenty others, whose wounds rendered them almost helpless, remaining behind to do what they could towards preparing a camp.

The "cache" of provisions was situated on a low alder covered point formed by an abrupt semi-circular winding of the river, being distant about half an hour's march along its north bank, and although the first

visit of the Iroquois to the place had been made in canoes, they had too well noted the locality and surrounding land-marks to fear mistaking it. Beating through the bush along the river's side, the band advanced slowly and cautiously, searching the thickets with eye and hand at every step, and taking all possible precaution against a surprise. The first part of the route was traversed with difficulty, but in the vicinity of the point, leafy avenues, where noble elms stretched their giant arms across the forest sward, lessened the danger and toil of their march, and at last the alders were reached and the "cache" found. Near it no enemy could be seen, although complete preparations for an ambuscade were discovered to be in readiness. But the provisions and

war-baggage had entirely disappeared. Of all they had hidden there, not a vestige remained.

Again and again the Iroquois searched as if unwilling to let themselves be convinced of the terrible truth, until at last, gloomy and disheartened, and feeling that the end was not yet, they once more turned their steps in the direction of the camp. Twilight was now beginning to close, and down mossy aisles, darkened by lofty trees, the reflections of the torches carried by their leaders danced and wavered. Suddenly, from an entanglement of saplings and branches shaped like a hunting hedge, which hitherto they had not observed, issued a battle-cry and a fresh volley of arrows, immediately followed by the rustling noise

made by men or animals when fleeing in haste through the forest. The Iroquois darted in pursuit but retarded as they were by the obstructing brushwood soon saw that the attempt was useless, and rallying once again continued their march towards the fires of the encampment. Still more wounded. Always this invisible, intangible foe. Ever ambushes that they did not even suspect. This was no longer war; it was the sport of the huntsman with human beings for game.

At last they reached the camp. But what a horrible spectacle was illumined by the fires whose glare they had seen from afar. Of the twenty wounded men left there two hours before not one remained alive. In the pale light of the flickering

camp-fire, their ghastly corpses, mutilated and scalped, lay weltering on the stained sod.

The Iroquois shook with rage and despair and only came to themselves to find that the few provisions, all the utensils, and the remainder of the baggage had been either destroyed or stolen.



CHAPTER VII.

EXHAUSTED with fatigue and already harassed by the first pangs of hunger, the invaders saw begin for them a terrible night, the forerunner of days and of nights more terrible still. In the council held round the bivouac fire, at which the livid corpses of their slaughtered comrades seemed to assist, and of which, to their superstitious fancy, grinning spectres from the cavern at Bic seemed silent witnesses, there was no voice to point a way to safety. To live, they must hunt or fish; to see ever again their far-off home, the building of canoes must be attempted, for without canoes that home could never be reached. And all this

must be accomplished in the presence of a vigilant and unseen enemy, in the heart of an unknown country, and in the midst of a forest covered by scouts, at a time when their own band counted many wounded and was destitute of all implements and utensils other than those of war.

Difficult indeed was the solving of the problem, and well might the Iroquois hesitate.

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The allies, meanwhile, determined neither to lose nor to compromise a vengeance that they could relish at leisure, had decided on following one line of action, and with the resolution of men pitiless and unyielding as fate itself, were only too certain to pursue that line to its end. To refrain from

exposing themselves except in case of urgent need, to allow the Iroquois no means of escape from their desperate situation, to pursue and harass them ceaselessly, and to immolate them in detail, was the course on which both Micmacs and Malechites were fully resolved.

During the first part of the night, which the Southern invaders passed in the sleeplessness of insecurity, the allies, guarded by well-posted and watchful sentinels, reposed in restful slumber. And when, a little before day-break, yielding to exhaustion, and in that species of recklessness which is the daughter of despair, the Iroquois had fallen asleep, leaving on guard only a few men dizzy and wearied from the horrible events of the preceding day, their enemies were

near, gliding under the covert and taking advantage of the early breeze which then filled the forest with the sough of waving trees, to approach nearer and nearer to their victims. Imagining he heard an unusual noise, one of the camp sentinels crept forward to reconnoitre, when a whistle, keen as the merlin's cry, caught his ear. The next moment, sending forth cries of anguish and terror, he and his brother sentinels fell pierced by many arrows.

Starting from sleep in confusion, the Iroquois seized their arms, but before they could ascertain the cause of tumult or recover from their sudden panic, a volley of shafts from the surrounding darkness swept into their midst. And, as suddenly, the arrows ceased; the stillness of solitude

reigned anew about the camp, finding its despairing occupants still further weakened by wounds both grievous and many.

* * * * * *

Day broke, and the Iroquois prepared to depart from this hateful spot which even the birds of the forest had forsaken, and where peril encompassed them on every hand. Glad, too, were they to flee from the corpses of their butchered comrades, and from the loathsome temptations which, with the phantom of famine looming near, the sight of them occasioned. For although, at times, the Iroquois had eaten of the flesh of their enemies, the act had been one of pure revenge, and indeed was considered the utmost length to which human vengeance

could reach; to feed, therefore, on the dead bodies of their own brothers, would have been accounted an act of the greatest sacrilege.

Ignorant of the surrounding country, they determined to make for the Rivière Trois Pistoles, following the detours of the Bouabouscache to avoid any mistake, and this being the route by which they had arrived. But although, in a direct line, the distance was not great, and with canoes could be traversed in a few hours, a march through bush and thicket, and across rocks, morasses, and streams, promised much greater difficulties. And to the fatiguing and interminable work of beating along the bank of a forest river, where the progress of the woodsman is so slow that, when miles seem to have been accomplished,

furlongs only have been covered, there was added, for the Iroquois, the necessity of existing by hunting or fishing, under circumstances both exceptional and disastrous.

When, therefore, the band was ready to start, among the fifty survivors from the assaults of the preceding days there were twelve of the wounded who declared themselves incapable of undertaking the journey, and as was customary with Indian warriors, demanded death. No time could be lost. In accordance with their desire, the unhappy men were tomahawked by their more fortunate comrades, and their corpses thrown across the burning logs of the camp fire, were speedily consumed, in order that these Iroquois scalps should not become triumphal

trophies and ornaments for a *fête* of the foe.

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The policy pursued by the allies of abstaining from bodily conflict except as a last resort, was not solely the fruit of calculation and the refinement of revenge, but was forced on them by necessity. Less numerous than the enemy, they had fortunately, up to the present moment, been able to operate in a body, but the time had now come when their party must divide into two bands. For it was necessary that the canoes containing their provisions, baggage, and reserve arms be kept out of all possible reach, far from the point of attack, and to guard and conduct these, ten men were required. Only

a score of warriors, therefore, confident but cautious, remained to follow and combat the thirty-eight Iroquois who, though weakened and unnerved, were known to be formidable to the last.

Meanwhile the fugitives, before leaving the landing-place on the Bouabouscache, had examined and analyzed the tracks left the previous evening and that morning by the foe, and were now aware that the number of their hidden assailants was few. This discovery, added to the possible chances afforded by a heavy rain which had just commenced, caused a small gleam of hope to sparkle before the eyes of the despairing warriors as they set forth on their fateful journey.

But four hours of a tortuous and weary march, equal at most to a

league as the crow flies, had been accomplished, and several of the wounded stragglers, who, as was usual in the retreats of Indian war, had been left uncared for, fell a prey to the scalping knives of their pursuers. On still went their fleeing comrades, through swamp and covert, across rock and stream, until midday when, famishing with hunger, and reaching a spot where food seemed likely to be procured, the flight was stayed.

A few partridges, porcupines, and other small game were the results yielded by a hunt which occupied the remainder of that day, and having set some snares and fish-traps near by, the fugitives, grateful for food and rest, prepared a camp for the night and sank exhausted into slum-

ber. The morrow came, and, refreshed by sleep and by the fish and animals found entrapped, they once more set forward on their toilsome march. Three days thus passed in flight and pursuit, days of hardship and of peril, and, already in the fatal chase, eleven of the wounded had paid to their implacable pursuers the debt of blood contracted at the cavern of Bic.

On the evening of the third day, approaching the Rivière Trois Pistoles, a grove of giant birch surrounded by hills was reached, and in several places fresh marks on trees, the bark of which had been eaten by moose, were to be seen. Hope lived again in the breasts of the despairing fugitives, for this discovery was to them as the saving plank of a total wreck. Could

they but procure a small quantity of venison for food, and, from the large bark so found hastily constructed four or five canoes, they might, in a few hours, reach the waters of the great St. Lawrence, and, safe at last, set out again for the land, the far-off land of their fathers. Confident once more, the remaining Indians, who, in spite of the disasters through which they had passed, still retained the courage of their race, began the task before them with all the ardor of strong hearts recovering from the blows of a cruel fortune.

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At the mouth of a little river in the vicinity was found one of the bare islets formed by the heaping up of sand and gravel brought down by

the high tides of spring. A narrow channel, which it was possible to ford, separated the islet from the neighboring shores, and here, after the chase, the Iroquois felt that they could spend in peace the few days required for building canoes, without fear of surprise from their hidden foes. On this deserted spot their camp was that night prepared.

Early in the morning of the following day, the party set out to examine the moose traces they had seen when arriving, and soon were successful in finding tracks which had been quite recently left by a cow moose and her calf. The two animals had followed, in their winding course, a slope thickly covered with maple trees, and as the Indians soon discovered, had

walked at a pace which denoted the absence of all uneasiness.

The band halted a moment to arrange the details of the hunt, for important though it was that they obtain possession of the game,—an end which could not be accomplished by advancing in a body,—it was equally necessary, on account of the possible presence of the enemy, that their forces be not weakened. Two of the most noted huntsmen of the party, therefore, started in advance to stalk the animals, whilst the others, noiselessly following at some little distance, held themselves in readiness to afford their brothers any help that might be required. For over an hour they advanced in this fashion, silently and slowly, when the practised ears of the two hunters heard in the dis-

tance, and coming from a winding in the maple-covered slope, the dull, plaintive cry, "Te-am," "Te-am," "Te-am," of the young moose. The Indians well knew that while, across the deep and hard snows of winter, the chase of the moose, that lordly monarch of the Canadian forest, was easy, during the months of summer it was extremely difficult, and could rarely be successfully accomplished. But now the huntsmen were cunning, the spot was favorable, and life or death hung on the issue.

That the stalking might not be frustrated, a few branches, forked across the way, were left by the two Iroquois on the trail they had made, to notify the remainder of the band to halt there and, without danger of frightening the game, to redouble

their perhaps needed watch. Then, with infinite care, they began the approach, moving, as the wind came thence, straight to the trees amidst which the moose had hidden.

Cautiously advancing a step and sinking behind the sheltering bushes, noiselessly rising to look before, and stealthily creeping forward on hands and knees, gliding around the intervening clearances, taking advantage of every irregularity in the ground, breaking not a twig or branch on their way — bringing to bear, in a word, all the craft that an intimate knowledge of the forest and of the haunts of its denizens, combined with a desperate patience, could develop, they gradually approached nearer and nearer to the prey.

The young moose, half concealed

by a large fallen tree thickly covered with brambles of rounds and maple, was lying down with its back towards the hunters, while a couple of paces further its mother could be seen, standing as if buried in the dense encircling foliage.

Creeping over the forest sward, the stalkers, after many a halt, at length came within close arrow range of the two animals. The female, doubtless chewing the cud, had not stirred, but the plaintive little caller moved restlessly from time to time on its grassy couch. Cautiously raising themselves, the Indians each firmly planted a knee on the sod; then bending their bows with vigorous arms, and aiming through the openings of the thicket, they discharged at the beasts two strongly driven arrows,



"When Winter's Shadows Deepen and the Day's Work is Over."

and the next instant to make success sure, rushed forward towards the game. In a moment they reached the bodies of the moose, but ere their knives sank into the palpitating flesh, they themselves, pierced by quivering shafts and without power to utter a cry, fell in the throes of death. The Micmac-Malechites had, before them, killed the cow moose, and having fastened her little one close by, had baited their enemies as they baited the bear, the lynx, or the wolverine of their native forest.

But not yet was the man-hunt finished. Hastily placing the bodies of the two huntsmen half upright against the fallen tree and near those of the animals, the allies sent forth a double cry, long and loud, and awaited in their ambush the coming of the

foe. The Iroquois, believing that the stalkers had called, arrived, full of hope which grew into exultation at the sight of their two comrades bending over the fallen game. A volley of murderous arrows was their only welcome. Feeble and discouraged, the unfortunate men attempted no resistance, but fled back to the islet, leaving on the ground nine of their party to be scalped by the avengers. Gaining once more the pebbly bed in the river, the miserable fugitives summoned all their fortitude to meet the death now drawing so near.

The allies a few hours later, assembling in full force round the canoes which had been brought forward by their companions and drawn up on the beach, decided that the time to finish with their foes had

come, and bent on securing some prisoners to swell the triumph of victory, determined to make the attack at once. Dividing their band, they charged on both sides the islet occupied by the last of the murderers of their brothers. The battle was soon over, although even in this unequal combat three of the Malechites were killed and many others of the allied party wounded. With the exception of six taken alive, the entire band of Iroquois was tomahawked and scalped, and their bodies were left on the reddened sand, to bear ghastly testimony to the vindictiveness of Indian revenge.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE morrow was a day of triumph for the Micmacs and Malechites.

Over their camp fire the tender meat of the young moose was put to roast, and meanwhile one of the prisoners, tied to the fatal stake, was made the sport of their cruelty and savage glee. Insults and torments wreaked on the victim served as interludes to the chants, dances, and feast of victory, and at last the unfortunate Iroquois, in the act of expiring, was scalped in the presence of his five comrades, who, bound and helpless, had been silent witnesses of the scene.

On the following day, after sharing

the scalps and each taking several of the remaining prisoners, the allies separated, renewing their oaths of alliance, and vowing eternal hatred of the Iroquois nation. Both parties set out towards their homes, the Malechites returning in canoes to the Madaouaska, and the five Micmacs, with two prisoners, taking once more the forest path to Bic.

On reaching the Baie, the Indians met a number of their tribe, who, at the appeal of the women and aged men sent down the St. Lawrence on the approach of the Iroquois, had instantly started in canoes to succour their beleagured brethren. Together they visited the scene of the massacre, and together they beheld, now strewn along the rocky beach, and covering the floor of that gloomy cave, the

decomposing and unrecognizable bodies of those whom once they had loved. Then, after placing within the grotto all the corpses of their murdered kindred, and before bidding the spot a last good-bye (for even to this day the Micmacs never camp at Bic) two stakes were set on the green, and the Iroquois prisoners, with faces turned towards the rugged Isle of the Massacre, were bound thereto. Having first been scalped alive, they were then subjected to every torture which the most ferocious cruelty could invent, and at last, when about to expire, their naked bodies, surrounded by fagots of bark, were burned to ashes, as the final and crowning act of Indian retribution.

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For long after, says tradition, the shades of the massacred Micmacs were to be seen at night wandering over the cliffs of the Islet, and mingling their sighs with the moaning of the sea. Often, too, at the midnight hour, a band of phantom Indians, armed with pale torches, was observed dancing, with grotesque contortions, on the beach of the Baie. And it is in harmony with this tradition that the two capes which bound the entry of the St. Lawrence waters, have received the grim names of "Cap Enragé" and "Cap aux Corbeaux."

Centuries have passed, and still in the farmer's dwelling, when winter's shadows deepen and the day's work is over, while the kitchen fire is blazing and the home-brewed ale is drawn,

with bated breath and flushed cheek, the story of the massacre is told.

Up to late years the whitened bones of the murdered Micmacs covered the floor of the cavern, and even now, when over its gloomy cliffs a mantle of darkness has fallen, when the owl's discordant cry can be heard above the booming of the sea, and when, through waving pines and rocky crevasses, the night-wind sings its mournful song, "uttering," says the story, "the plaintive cry as of a soul in pain," many there are not so bold as to venture on the lonely sepulchre of the unfortunate Indians of Bic.

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